

Philippine president's visit

Reaffirming strong ties with Japan

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AMBASSADOR OF THE PHILIPPINES

As the Philippines and Japan commemorate 55 years since the establishment of their bilateral relations, it is particularly significant that the Official Working Visit to Japan of President Benigno S. Aquino III from Sept. 25 to 28 marks the continued strengthening of the bilateral relations between close neighbors and friends to a strategic partnership poised to meet the coming challenges and opportunities.

The visit of President Aquino reaffirms the special bonds forged throughout decades of close cooperation in the political-security, economic and socio-cultural spheres. Based on a common adherence to democratic principles, respect for human rights and good neighborliness, the Philippine-Japanese bilateral relationship has had a positive impact on regional peace and stability.

As Japan continues to deal with the challenges of reconstruction in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake, the president's visit serves as another concrete occasion to renew the solidarity of the people and government of the Philippines with the Japanese people and government. The resilience, fortitude and unity of the Japanese people



Solidarity: Philippine President Benigno S. Aquino III signs the Book of Condolences for the victims of the March 11 earthquake and tsunami that hit northeastern Japan at the Japanese ambassador's residence in suburban Makati, east of Manila, on March 17. PHILIPPINE EMBASSY

amid unprecedented crisis are indeed admirable and inspiring to the Philippines as it has also been buffeted by numerous calamities and disasters.

President Aquino will have the opportunity to meet with His Imperial Majesty Emperor Akihito and personally reiterate his belief that Japan shall make great strides in rebuilding itself.

The president will also have the distinction as the first Asian

leader to meet Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda in Japan. President Aquino has said that he wants to meet Prime Minister Noda "to be able to continue the strong relationship between the two countries that have been allies for quite a long time."

President Aquino also said that he wants to thank Japan for its continuing assistance to the Philippines. The president said: "Japan has been very good

to us ... contributing the largest source of official development assistance."

Japan has also been an important partner in helping move the peace process in Mindanao forward through its numerous and constructive engagements. In particular, Japan's unwavering commitment to realize lasting peace and sustainable development in Mindanao is demonstrated by Japan's presence in the International Monitoring Team, the International Contact Group and the J-BIRD Program. Indeed, the government of Japan, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and Japan-Bangsamoro Initiatives for Reconstruction and Development (J-BIRD) have become symbols of peace, hope and sustainable development for the Filipino people.

Profile of the president

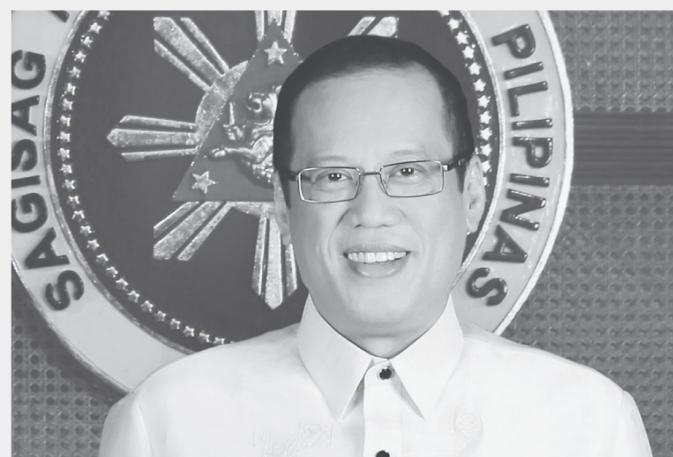
President Benigno S. Aquino III has always viewed politics as a necessary vehicle for change, a perspective he formed early in life through the examples set by his parents, Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr. and President Corazon "Cory" C. Aquino, two icons of democracy in the Philippines.

President Aquino is an economist by education and a lawmaker by vocation.

In 1998, he ran for a seat in the House of Representatives and won. He served as a congressman of the 2nd District of Tarlac until 2007.

In his nine years in the House, Aquino focused on the fiscalizing role of a legislator. He felt that there were already too many laws, though good ones at that, but they seemingly lacked proper implementation. He concentrated on crafting laws that would help create opportunity rather than impose additional burdens to those who are already disadvantaged. He actively took part in budget deliberations to ensure that government initiatives truly address the plight of the people who need help the most.

His commitment to continue the legacy of his parents was evident in his performance. In November 2004, he became deputy house speaker of Luzon until February 2006. In May 2007, he ran for a position as a senator and won, placing sixth in the national elections. He chaired the Senate Committee on Local Government and was also the vice chairperson of the Committee on Justice and Human Rights. He was determined to ensure that his key legislative initiatives would bear fruit and to see them through until the end of his term.



President of the Philippines Benigno S. Aquino III

However, fate had other plans for him. The passing of his mother in August 2009 stirred a long-dormant yearning for good leadership. Filipinos from all walks of life, here and abroad, began to look at him as the new hope for a better Philippines. The groundswell calling for him to run for president became too loud to ignore and eventually overcame his reluctance.

President Aquino's landslide victory in the 2010 brought with him the winds of change. As he said in his inaugural speech, it was time to usher in a new era of governance, "one that works for the welfare of the nation," whose "foremost duty is to lift the nation from poverty through honest and effective governance." President Aquino announced these

changes knowing that the Filipino people had given him a robust mandate, a rare opportunity to push through many vital improvements that any government on a less solid footing would hesitate to implement. In the president's own words to his constituents: "The mandate given to me was one of change. ... This mandate is the social contract that we agreed upon."

If positive change is his administration's contract with the Filipino people, a country governed by the rule of law is President Aquino's pledge to the international community.

"I invite you to take part in the transformation of the Philippines," President Aquino urges the global community.

As the first and only bilateral free trade agreement of the Philippines thus far, the Philippines-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (PJEPA) presents a unique opportunity to expand and deepen bilateral relations and bring about mutual advantages. Since its entry into force in December 2008, the PJEPA has been an important pillar to the strategic partnership of the two countries despite the global economic crisis and the financial instability in recent years. The Philippines and Japan remain committed to the smooth implementation of the PJEPA in

order to maximize the mutual benefits.

It is therefore not surprising that, in 2010, Japan was the largest trading partner of the Philippines. Trade volume between the two countries increased in 2010 as compared to 2009: Philippine exports to Japan increased from \$6.21 billion in 2009 to \$7.80 billion in 2010. Philippine imports from Japan rose from \$5.34 billion in 2009 to \$6.75 billion in 2010.

Japan remains the biggest investor in the Philippines in terms of investments approved by the Investment Promotion Agency

(IPA), with a value of 58.3 billion Philippine pesos in 2010. It may be noted that the accumulated Japanese direct investment to the Philippines in the last five years, from 2006 to 2010, is PHP203.8 billion. With President Aquino's sustained commitment and steady steps to establishing a responsive, accountable and transparent government, a more conducive environment for greater trade and investments is ensured.

The Philippines and Japan have had numerous bilateral, high-level visits and regular policy dialogues across many

strategic issues of common concern. The Philippines and Japan have also been active partners in promoting deeper and stronger political-security relations in the region and the world through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN-Japan, ASEAN+3, East Asia Summit and the United Nations, among other frameworks. Both countries share many strategic regional and global interests, such as maritime security, disarmament and nuclear nonproliferation, counterterrorism, environmental protection and climate change, among other issues. There is much scope for both countries to enhance cooperation on these issues on a bilateral, regional and global basis.

Indeed, the Philippines and Japan have deep and extensive ties. Nowhere is this strategic partnership more palpable and tangible than in the steady stream of people-to-people exchanges between both countries. The vibrant Filipino community in Japan, the fourth largest group of foreign residents in Japan at more than 210,000, and the growing number of Japanese families living in the Philippines, as well as the exchanges of tourists and visitors, students, nurses and caregivers, long-term expatriate workers and managers, are generating deeper understanding and cultural appreciation between our two peoples.

When Dr. Jose Rizal, the national hero of the Philippines, visited Japan more than a century ago, he predicted that the Philippines and Japan would have more intense and extensive relations. Indeed, the intensity and extensiveness of the strategic partnership between the Philippines and Japan will continue way far into the future.

Warmest Welcome

to His Excellency President Benigno S. Aquino III
of the Republic of the Philippines



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on the Occasion of His Official
Working Visit to Japan

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Philippine president's visit / world

Agenda of president's Official Working Visit

President Benigno S. Aquino III is undertaking an Official Working Visit to Japan from Sept. 25 to 28 on the invitation of the government of Japan.

In the course of his visit, the president will pay a State Call on His Imperial Majesty Emperor Akihito, who will be hosting a Court Luncheon in his honor.

President Aquino will also have a summit meeting with Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda to discuss the advancement of bilateral

relations and exchange views on issues of mutual interest.

A major objective of the president's visit will involve his attendance at a business forum and a round-table discussion with key Japanese businessmen.

The president is meeting the Filipino community in Tokyo as well as Filipino nationals and locals in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, one of the cities most severely affected by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.



Economic ties: A Philippine Investment Seminar in Tokyo on Feb. 1 informs the Japanese business community of the investment environment and opportunities under the administration of President Benigno S. Aquino III, encouraging firms to continue to take part in the country's resurgence. PHILIPPINE EMBASSY

Maximizing investor earnings, enjoyment

The Philippines is blessed with some of the region's most spectacular attractions, including picture-perfect islands and beaches and a beautifully diverse natural terrain. For a country with so much to offer, there are many opportunities for the establishment of world-class tourist infrastructure and facilities in the archipelago, an issue that the government has recognized and now aims to address.

Executive Order No. 63 grants incentives to foreigners investing at least \$50,000 in a tourist-related project or any tourist establishment in the Philippines, as determined by the committee created by the same law. The order further grants the foreign investor a Special Investor's Resident Visa (SIRV) for as long as the investment exists. The order also recognizes the right of the investor to remit earnings from his investment in the currency in which the investment was originally made and at the exchange rate prevailing at the time of remittance.

Moreover, the Omnibus Investments Code authorizes the

Board of Investments to grant fiscal incentives and non-fiscal incentives for local and foreign investors engaged in tourism activities listed under the current Investments Priorities Plan. Incentives granted include income tax holidays of up to six years as well as the employment of foreign nationals.

The need for improved accessibility will likewise open rich investment opportunities in air, water and land transport operations. In response to worldwide demand for integrated tourism development, the Department of Tourism is also encouraging investments in tourism estates, historical-cultural heritage projects, as well as ecotourism and agricultural tourism projects.

The Philippine Tourism Authority has in fact been reorganized into the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), a corporate body whose mandate includes the designation and administration of special areas devoted to tourism-related projects, known as tourism enterprise zones (TEZs), in the mold of special economic zones.



Natural attractions: The Philippines is an archipelago of many beautiful beaches, such as the white sands in Boracay, and fascinating scenery such as the Chocolate Hills (below) in Bohol. PHILIPPINE EMBASSY

